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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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TAGS: PINT, PEPR, SA, US
SUBJECT: WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION AND THE ARABS: TWO SAUDI VIEWS

1. SAUDI PRESS COMMENTARY HAS BEEN DIVIDED ABOUT THE IMPORT-
TANCE OF PRO-ARAB U.S. PUBLIC OPINION. ALTHOUGH MOST COMMEN-
TATORS AGREE THAT THE SADAT INITIATIVE, EVENTS IN LEBANON,
AND THE RESULTS OF SADAT'S AND BEGIN'S U.S. TRIPS
HAVE ALL BROUGHT A SHIFT IN WESTERN (ESPECIALLY AMERICAN)
PUBLIC OPINION IN FAVOR OF THE ARAB CAUSE, THERE ARE STILL
SHARP DIFFERENCES ABOUT WHETHER THIS "FAVORABLE" SHIFT WILL
HAVE ANY DIRECT EFFECT ON THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE MIDDLE
EAST. SOME SAUDI PRESS COMMENTATORS ARE NOW ASKING:
WILL THE ARABS, HAVING GAINED CHANGE IN U.S. PUBLIC OPINION
RECEIVE ANY BENEFIT FROM THEIR IMPROVED IMAGE IN THE
WEST? IN OTHER WORDS, IS THE GAME WORTH THE TROUBLE?
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2. AN EDITORIAL IN THE ARAB NEWS (APRIL 4) PLACES GREAT
IMPORTANCE ON BOTH DIRECT U.S. SUPPORT FOR SADAT'S PEACE
EFFORTS AND THE AMERICAN "CONFRONTATION" WITH BEGIN. THE
EDITORIAL NOTES TWO OPPOSING POINTS OF VIEW ABOUT AMERICAN
ACTION: FIRST,THAT ALTHOUGH SLOW IT IS EFFECTIVE AND HAS
IMPROVED CONDITIONS FOR PEACE. THE OPPOSING ARGUMENT IS

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THAT THE U.S. DOES NOT APPRECIATE THE URGENCY OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION AND THAT RAPID ACTION MUST BE TAKEN TO PREVENT THE OCCURENCE OF A TRAGEDY. THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDES WITH AN APPEAL FOR PATIENCE: "BUT THE ARABS MUST BE FAIR TO PRESIDENT CARTER. DESPITE ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS HE STILL FACES PROBLEMS WITH CONGRESS IN TRYING TO SELL ARMS TO THE ARABS DESPITE THE FACT THAT MANY AMERICANS ARE BEGINNING TO SEE THAT THE ARABS WANT PEACE WHILE BEGIN WANTS SETTELMENTS".

3. AN EDITORIAL WRITER IN THE MAGAZINE IQRA (MARCH 30) PRESENTS A MUCH MORE PESSIMISTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE QUESTION OF U.S. PUBLIC OPINION. IN HIS VIEW PUBLIC OPINION WAS USED AS A PRETEXT TO DECEIVE NAIVE ARABS ABOUT THE TRUE INTENTIONS OF AMEIRCANS AND EUROPEANS. IN A SARCASTIC COLUMN ENTITLED, "REJOICE O ARABS, YOU HAVE WON PUBLIC OPINION" THE WRITER NOTES U.S. FAILURE TO PRESSURE ISRAEL STATING, "SINCE IT WAS NECESSARY TO GIVE A JUSTIFICATION OR JUSTIFICATIONS (FOR THIS FAILURE) TO THOSE NAIVE AND HELPLESS ARABS WHO BELIEVE EVERYTHING AND ANYTHING COMING FORM THE UNITED STATES, IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE 'JUSTIFICATION' TO THE ARABS SHOULD BE THAT AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT THE QUESTION FROM ITS ARAB SIDE".

4. IN THE WRITER'S VIEW THE ARABS WERE DUPED INTO THINK-
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ING THAT CHANGING WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION WAS THE KEY TO BRINGING DECISIVE AMERICAN ACTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THAT ARABS THEMSELVES HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHANGING THAT OPINION. THUS, "ARAB ENVOYS, DELEGATES, LECTURERS, AND DOCTORS POURED INTO THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE TO DESCRIBE THIS 'UNKNOWN' PROBLEM AS IF ENENTS HAD HAPPENED IN NEVER-NEVER LAND AND NOT IN THE MIDDLE EAST".

5. ACCORDING TO THIS WRITERS'S VIEW, PUBLIC OPINION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH REALITY OF THE QUESTION--FOR NOW THAT THE ARABS HAVE FOLLOWED THE ADVICE OF THEIR WESTERN FRIENDS AND HAVE GAINED THE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC OPINION, THE ISRAELIS ARE ENTRENCHED IN SOUGH LEBANON. IN A FINAL JAB AT PRESIDENT SADAT THE WRITER NOTES, "SOME EGYPTIAN PAPERS SAY THAT NINETY PER CENT OF AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION SUPPORTS PRESIDENT SADAT. SO REJOICE, O ARABS, AND YOU MUST CONGRATULATE YOURSELVES FOR 'WINNING' AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION."
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